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CHEAP SHOPS IN LONDON.

THERE is probably no spot in the United Kingdom where money can be laid out to better advantage than in the metropolis; for while it is perfectly true that the best and the worst of everything come to London, you are not compelled to buy the worst; and it simply requires a knowledge of town to lay out your money to the best possible advantage. The astute Londoner goes to the Borough for his boots; then he slants over to Houndsditch for new or, at anyrate, new-looking hats at three-and-sixpence each. He buys wine and jewellery in the City, fish in Billingsgate, coats and tea in Whitechapel, resorting only to the West end when in quest of articles used all but exclusively by the upper classes. He is well acquainted too with the refreshment houses along the different lines of road, and will take you to the best places to find good claret on draught, and to antiquated old taverns up alleys where you can obtain the best glass of bitter beer, or extra-strong Scotch and Burton ales. And if your means are of the smallest, and you desire a complete rig-out of second-hand clothing for about ten shillings, he will conduct you to marts where your pocket can be suited to a nicety. In short, things in London can be bought at any price; while some things—if they are to be purchased at all—*must* be purchased there; for it is no uncommon affair to find goods despatched wholesale from the place of production to London, and thence actually sent back again in small quantities to be sold retail.

Some years since, partaking of breakfast in a country inn, we tasted some particularly nice bacon, and imagining, of course, that it was fed on the spot, inquired if we could be supplied with a small quantity to take back to town. The reply we had was, that the bacon came from London, but was produced on a neighbouring farm, the occupier of which would not supply small quantities, as it answered his purpose better to contract with a London dealer to take the whole of it off his hands for cash down.

As a rule, in London the best articles are to be bought in the widest thoroughfares and at the largest shops; and this rule for strangers is a sufficiently safe guide. But at the same time we can go to shops, and those in the back slums, where provisions of the best quality can be purchased at the lowest price; for the poorer classes are as fastidious in their tastes as their more aristocratic neighbours; and it is an error to suppose, as some people do, that because a man is poor he cannot appreciate anything that is good. The case in fact is quite the reverse; we believe that the lower we descend in the social scale, the more extravagant and epicurean does the taste become. It is sharpened by hunger, a far better provocative to the palate than wine; and we have known shoeless and hatless vagabonds who, if they had the wherewithal, would dine daily on the rarest luxuries.

It will we think be found, on a careful comparison of the highest and lowest classes, that as regards certain characteristics they are identical, and meet on extreme points, with this saving difference, that if the better-to-do classes squandered their pounds as recklessly as does the beggar his pence, the upper ten thousand would speedily become an extinct order everywhere.

Let us see then how adulteration comes to exist, for exist it does, and is perhaps more rampant in London than anywhere else. Acts of parliament and Borough analysts have removed, no doubt, the copper out of pickles and green peas, and perhaps a little red ochre from anchovies; but still there remain family jam at fourpence a pound and butter at ninepence, any quantity of either of which can be bought all over London in back localities. So far as the actual trade in adulteration is concerned, legislation has done but little, and probably will never be able to accomplish more. The reasons are obvious. In the first place, our present weights and measures bear a certain definite proportion to our coinage, and unless certain weights are established for certain articles, they must either be adulterated or not sold at all. We will select one article—say, for example's

sake, mustard—and suppose that it can be sold genuine at one shilling and eightpence per pound. That is of course five farthings per ounce; but how is a halfpenny-worth or a farthing's-worth to be made except by guessing the weight? So accordingly mustard is adulterated down to sixteenpence per pound (a penny per ounce), and thus the scale is accommodated. This is the principal key to the adulteration of most of the articles sold in the petty shops; for as the large shops do not care to sell pennyworths and farthingworths, the small shops exist on what the large turn away.

The bread-winner of a family among the wretched classes will take home in the evening say eighteenpence, which he has obtained somehow or other during the day. The wife will lay this out nearly as follows: bread, sixpence; of butter, tea, sugar, coal, cheese, and tobacco, each one penny-worth, with candle one halfpenny, leaving a balance of fivepence-halfpenny wherewith to buy beer and start 'her old man' on a fresh bread-hunting expedition on the morrow. These articles will all be purchased at a small 'general' shop, where they sell everything necessary for household use, adulterated probably to suit the weights and measures, and for no other reason.

But if the wretched classes are compelled to patronise the 'general' shop on account of their poverty, there is a class above them which does the same for a very different reason. Honest John the mechanic who makes his thirty or five-and-thirty shillings a week goes there also, and lays out a portion of his money. It is true he does not spend very much of it there; he goes in preference to those large wholesale establishments where they have a retail branch annexed, and where not a farthing's-worth of credit can by any possibility be obtained. He knows that everything he purchases at such places will be of the best, and at least twenty per cent. better than what is offered at the general shop. But the general shop gives credit, and it is his policy to lay out there some of his earnings, running as he usually does, a weekly bill. He knows full well that slack times will occur, when he may be out of work perhaps for eight or nine weeks together, and that without credit from the general shop he will be unable to pull through his difficulties. And the general shop knows him—he has dealt there for years, and they trust him when out of work; because if they do not, they will certainly lose his custom when he regains employment. The general shop in turn obtains credit from second and third rate wholesale houses who supply, with certain exceptions, the articles ready mixed; and we seldom read of either wholesale or retail men being pulled up for adulterating. More than that, they rarely comply with that clause in the Act of parliament which requires them to indicate in writing or printing any article which may be a mixture; on the contrary, they stick huge placards inviting people to try butter at ninepence per pound, not one half of which of course has actu-

ally been produced by the cow; and extol the medicinal virtues of marmalade at fourpence, of a gelatinous appearance, and certainly not the product of the Seville orange.

The causes of adulteration then are mainly to be found in the necessities of the working and poorer classes; and until constant employment and regular wages can be guaranteed, so long it is to be feared will adulteration be an institution among us. The shopkeepers who sell rubbish are not so much to blame as at first sight would appear. As a rule they are honest men, and do not adulterate systematically, as some people imagine, with the view of picking the pockets of their customers, but because they know that business cannot be carried on as things are going at present, unless they deal in sophisticated goods. We suspect the real dishonesty is to be found among a class of manufacturers who, by ingenious chemical processes, make nearly worthless articles of sufficient commercial value to mix undiscovered with genuine. And yet even the poorer classes, if they knew how to do it, could at all times, as we shall endeavour to shew, lay out their earnings on food that is at once cheap and wholesome. Calling upon a butcher of our acquaintance in the Seven Dials, we ascertain from him that one side of his shop is devoted to the sale of meat, the other for the sale of cat's-meat; that of this latter commodity he usually sells a thousand ha'porths every Sunday morning, and that we can have any quantity we like at twopence per pound. However, as we can lay out twopence to better advantage in meat—as we shall presently see—we continue our journey. In Drury Lane we find excellent bread sold in elegant shops, and down in Clare Market abundance of good English meat, rather fat perhaps, but that will do excellently to send to the bakehouse on Sunday over a dish of potatoes. Here the buyers are chiefly of the humbler classes; things as a rule are good and cheap, save at the inevitable general shop; and being pestered to buy an enormous haddock for fivepence, we take it home, and find the quality excellent; not of course to be compared to Finnan haddocks, but still capital for hungry stomachs. Down Leather Lane we come upon the Italian nationality, with its peculiar sort of cook-shops, restaurants, and ice-shops, and here again nothing foreign is inviting; the costermongers with their barrow-loads of English vegetables, making up for the deficiency by the substantial appearance of their wares. Taking a flight across to the Metropolitan Meat Market in Smithfield, we find butchers asking us prices in accordance with our style of dress and presumed innocence; but it is Saturday night and rather late; moreover it is warm weather, and the meat must be sold at any price rather than remain on hand during Sunday. So as closing-time approaches, off it goes, six pounds for a shilling, excellent meat; and the frugal housewives who have bought it, go home and take the precaution to put it down before the fire or in the pot at

once, and give it enough cooking to insure its preservation until the morrow. We will now pass through the City and see how matters fare at the East end, the abode of the working and poorer classes in London.

Of the East end of London we may say, as our opinion, that although you cannot buy there certain high-priced articles which you can in the West, yet that you can there lay out your money to greater advantage. With regard to groceries, there are some large establishments where fifteen or sixteen counter-men are constantly engaged banging their scales, the scene on Saturday nights being terrific. Exposed in stalls in the Whitechapel Road you see vegetables, fish, sweets, and cakes, all of good quality and very cheap; while if you go into a market in a back-street, you will find tolerable fresh fish going at about a penny a pound, onions four pounds for two-pence, good cheese at eightpence, and compressed dates at a penny. Oranges, cocoa-nuts, and other fruit, go remarkably cheap; with sweets three ounces a penny, tolerably good; while black-currant lozenges at a halfpenny per ounce are decidedly not the thing, though a fair imitation. And here is a man who has a truck-load of cheese, which he is offering at fourpence a pound, and very fair cheese it is. The meat too at one of the leading shops is good though not prime; and buyers can be suited at all prices, beginning with salt-beef at threepence per pound, going on to beef and mutton scraps at fivepence, and so on to ribs of beef at elevenpence. Yonder is an open shop with a burly individual in front, brandishing a large cutlass-shaped knife, and keeping up a rattling fire of small-talk. 'Rabbits mum—yes mum; seven and a half to-night.—Weigh up at five and four, Charley' (here he throws inside the shop a piece of bacon, and the customer follows round to see it weighed).—'Beautiful bit of real Wiltshire bacon, sir. Sold again; ha, ha! I thought we'd clear all off that board to-night.—Weigh up here at six and eight, Charley; keep the scale going; keep the scale hot, keep the scale hot!' and so on, up to the small-hours on Sunday morning. Here you obtain delicious butter at sixteenpence per pound; and if you will come with us down a back-lane near one of the wharfs, we will buy for you bacon at a shilling, which cannot be excelled either West or East.

We will now try an establishment opposite the principal entrance of the London Docks, where they boldly advertise 'a good dinner for fourpence.' Enter a few minutes before four, and innocently take a seat, supposing that a waiter will attend your wishes. Vain expectation; for as soon as the clock has struck, in rushes a crowd of hungry ragamuffins from the Docks, who seize each a plate, and having procured what they want, convey it to the nearest table and devour it. Having waited upon yourself in a similar manner, you find the fourpenny dinner to consist of a jorum of soup, a hunch of bread, and some well-baked greasy potatoes, the quantity of each article being for the money quite astounding. And if your hunger should still be unsatisfied, you can fill up with 'plum duff' baked in fat, or fatty roll pudding made with some of the 'family jam' at fourpence per pound to which we have before alluded. However, the proprietor does a roaring trade; and

these cheap cook-shops also do a good outdoor business in pennyworths of pudding, potatoes, and small quantities of meat; not to mention the fried-fish shops—and you must go to the East end to taste fried fish in perfection—where you can have a good fill for about twopence. There are thousands among the wretched classes who have no plates or knives, and who if they could not buy something ready cooked from such shops, would have nothing cooked at all. The other meals, breakfast or tea, they manage well enough. They have a bit of fire, and with a beer-can, the property of the public-house, they boil some tea, which they drink out of cocoa-nut shells, the sugar being left in its original paper; and butter, if they have any, spread on with a bit of stick on bread torn off the loaf, a skewer answering the purpose of a teaspoon. To the wretched holes in which they live, the parish relieving officers have access as a matter of course, and permit us to penetrate beneath the veil which covers the vice and poverty of the lowest classes.

When we speak of London milk we allude to an article from which it would, we think, be difficult to extract much butter; and to talk about skimming cream from which, is usually treated as a good joke. In former days we heard a good deal about milk compounded of sheep's brains, chalk, and other cheap if not good articles; but all that is now changed, for the government sanitary officials finding milk a liquid the adulteration of which could the most readily be detected, keep the milk-dealers constantly in terror, leaving horse-bean coffee and articles of that sort, requiring more skill in analysis, to take care of themselves. In spite of all their vigilance however, milk still in many places betrays an acquaintance with the pump, the small fines imposed on detection not acting as a sufficient deterrent. In many places however, where they keep cows, they advertise the hours of milking; and you can have the article in your own jug direct from the cow if you are so disposed. But it is to our minds scarcely possible to conceive of wholesome milk extracted from animals kept all the year round in close houses, and fed on stimulating diet to increase the quantity of their yield.

The milk question brings into our mind the quality of the viands supplied by the majority of the coffee-shops, frequented largely by working-men for their mid-day meal. Bad as is the coffee supplied by the adulterating 'general' shop, it is delicious compared with the horrible decoctions supplied at a high price by many of the ordinary coffee-shops, our own impression being, from actual tasting, that there is very little coffee at all in the mixture usually sold as such. Yet with all the adulteration they practise, many of the coffee-shops do a large trade, even the coffee-stalls in the streets which supply as small a quantity as a halfpennyworth of coffee, frequently taking eight or ten pounds per week. These are much patronised, especially at the West end, by certain classes, and at the East end by watermen and work-girls who have lain in bed until the very last minute, and snatch a flying breakfast as they go along to work.

Of late years, some enterprising and philanthropic individuals have started Coffee Public-houses, where every article of refreshment is sold

at the merest fraction above cost, the quality being of course excellent. But on this important subject we have already said a few words in another article.

YOUNG LORD PENRITH.

CHAPTER XIV.—ON BOARD THE 'WESTERN MAID.'

HUGH had not much time to waste in vain repinings. The Western Tug and Salvage Company did not intend their steamer stationed at Treport to be an ornamental fixture of what the natives designated the quay-pool, and non-Cornishmen knew as the harbour; and so the young captain of the *Western Maid* had plenty of occupation. There were, as Long Michael the mate had predicted, skippers commanding heavily laden merchantmen lying near the entrance of the Channel, who grew tired of whistling for a wind that never came, and contracted with some steamer to help them on their way towards Southampton Water or the Nore. Towing a big ship bound for the port of London, may not at first sight appear to be very exciting work; but Hugh Ashton cheerfully accepted his new duties, and discharged them in a manner that satisfied his employers and won the respect of his crew. Long Michael, whose unselfish soul rejoiced in the growing popularity of the young man who had been put over his head, rubbed his rough hands together and chuckled over his pupil's rapid progress.

' Picks up sea-learning, the Captain does, quicker than most,' the honest mate would say. 'Not that he wanted making into a sailor; that was done ready to hand. But then, the coast, it does want a sharp eye and a good memory to make sure of the landmarks, 'special in dark weather. And Captain Ashton's getting to know them as well as a shepherd knows his sheep.'

Estimable Michael had no idea of the hard and assiduous study of the chart in wakeful hours of the night, which enabled his young commander to compare real crags and promontories with their painted presentment on the map, and to know one beacon from another and one shoal from its fellow, along the difficult Channel coast. To the mate, who could read and write certainly—most Cornishmen can do that—but to whom book-lore was a Pilgrim's Progress of the most painful character, and whose eyes were familiar with no volumes but those which sea and sky present to the inquirer, Hugh's prompt proficiency appeared little less than marvellous. He, Michael, was a smart seaman, but had he not been 'at it' all his life, as 'prentice, ordinary, and A.B., until in the fullness of time he ripened into an officer? He had learned his trade thoroughly, but slowly, as those who learn by rule of thumb must ever acquire an art, and even now he was, though the best of mates, not fit to be a captain. Hugh was a smart seaman too; but he was something more, and being a gallant young fellow with a gentle temper and a lion's heart, had won the highest esteem that Long Michael had to bestow.

The *Western Maid* did good work, puffing and panting up the coast with a deep-laden three-master, like some gigantic fish fast hooked, lumbering heavily along at the other end of the tough tow-rope, and with just sail enough spread to get steerage-way upon her, and avoid fouling in the crowded waters east of Portland Bill. Then would

spring up a puff of air, a 'fine topsail breeze,' as the officers of the towed vessel would call it; and then the skipper, with the terrors of grumbling owners before his eyes, would discharge his steam-mentor, set every rag of canvas that would draw, and a little more, and run or beat unaided Londonwards, until the treacherous breeze died away, and there was swearing, and signalling for another tug out of some friendly harbour.

'Glad to have us, and glad to get rid of us!' Long Michael would say with a grin—'just as if, Cap., we were the doctor!'

The crew of the steamer criticised Hugh Ashton much as a company of foot-soldiers or troop of cavalry criticise in barrack-rooms the new captain who has arrived to lead them. And the questions they asked of one another were much the same, allowance being made for sea and shipwreck being the foes to fear, instead of human enemies, that soldiers would have propounded. Our new chief, of what stuff is he? Will he fight, or is the white-feather to be looked for? Does he worry a poor fellow's life out, or is he reasonable with those that do their best? Has he his weather-eye open, or is he a simpleton, and easy to deceive? The verdict as regarded Hugh was favourable. There are men whose daring no one doubts, whose very eye speaks of courage waiting for its opportunity, and Hugh was one of them. Then he was pleasant of speech and manner, but keen to note a dereliction of duty. Shirkers, and there were two or three on board the *Western Maid* who did the least they could for their wages, as warranted by the strictest principles of political economy, felt as though they would rather not shirk, with Hugh's eye upon them. He was no nagging martinet, but the men knew somehow that he had a rough as well as a smooth side to his tongue in the hour of need. And they liked him the better because they feared to offend him.

Of course Hugh was exceptionally lucky in his mate. It would have cost a malicious subordinate nothing to have put his unpractised superior constantly in the wrong, to have insured a growling crew, dissatisfied owners, and diminished profits to the Tug and Salvage Company. Even the frequent coaling would have been a stumbling-block in the path of an unaided tyro in Hugh's position. He had the printed instructions to guide him, but instructions of that sort are seldom very useful to a neophyte unless he has the advantage of somebody practical enough to read between the lines and to know what is really meant. Lightermen who bring off supplies of fuel to a tug are not always scrupulous as to weight and price; nor are deckhands invariably unwilling to abstain, in harbour, from slipping a sackful of black diamonds into some leaky punt or grimy wherry alongside.

Hugh did his work well, and earned the half-year's dividend for his masters the shareholders of the Western Tug and Salvage Company, better than old Captain Cleat in his best days had ever done. He conciliated by judicious firmness, ready banter, and serene good-humour, some of the sourest and most quarrelsome of skippers. He got cash payments, or certificates of indebtedness that were almost as valuable, where some of his temporary clients would fain have ignored their liability on casting off the tow-rope and hoisting sail.

'A good fair-weather Cap'en, I don't deny it,' said, in private fore-castle conclave, the worst man and the greatest talker on board the *Western Maid*, Salem Jackson by name. 'Nor yet I don't deny, chaps, that he's got a pleasant way of speaking up. I never liked the appointment, mind ye, shipmates. He's a lady's pet, he is; and what has an old dame, though she be Madam Moneybags, to do meddling with who's to command a craft like ours? Let's see what sort he turns out when we get the gales!'

But in spite of Salem Jackson and the smouldering embers of discontent that he sedulously strove to fan to flame, Hugh went prosperously on in his new career. He won golden opinions, and for that matter, gold in a more substantial shape, by discovering the famous derelict, the abandoned wine-ship from Lisbon, which was beginning to grow half-mythical, so many were the tales told of fishers and coasters that had sighted her at early dawn or dewy eve, hull down, in the dim distance, and of chases which fog, or night, or the set of adverse currents had rendered fruitless. As it was, Hugh listened much and said little, comparing the evidence, until he had made up his own mind as to the set of tide and sea-way, and, cruising off into the south-western waters, came in sight of the deserted vessel.

'Portuguese rigged! Nobody at the helm—a barque—and water-logged,' said Hugh, as he descended the rigging, his telescope under his arm, after taking a steady look at the derelict. 'I suspect the people aboard her were seized with a panic when she sprung a leak, took to their boats without a compass, and were lost. But she's safe enough; and it will go hard but we get her over Treport bar. Keep her away Jackson, will you—two points yet, d'y'e hear. And now Michael, we must drive her along.'

The fog-bank was nearly, but not quite, like some supernatural cloud in the Homeric epic, around the abandoned barque, when the steamer neared her sufficiently to enable grappling-irons to be flung into her standing gear. She had her jib and foresail yet set; but there was no hand upon the useless wheel, and the heavy craft drifted helpless, at the mercy of wind and sea. When boarded, not a living creature, as might have been expected, was found above hatches or below. Even the lories and parrots, chained to perches in the captain's cabin, had died for lack of food and water. The ship however, was yet sound, and the valuable cargo unhurt.

'Too much, to my mind, the skipper's share, according to present rules,' said one of the shareholders in the Tug and Salvage Company to another, below his breath, after the Board meeting. 'Two hundred and eighty pounds for that young Ashton, out of the port-wine ship. It's just a picking of all our pockets.'

'Ah, but my Lady likes him!' returned, with a grudging sigh, the congenial spirit to whom he spoke. 'The whole question of share and salary ought to be looked to. But Lady Absolute wouldn't stand it; and she owns nine-tenths of the stock, after all.'

In the meantime, and pending the desirable revision of share and salary, Hugh was half a hero in the eyes of the Treport maritime population. Nothing succeeds like success, and although there had gone no danger and little toil to the

winning of the wine-ship, whose owners or underwriters would be thankful to commute the total loss of vessel and cargo for a heavy award of salvage, still, in the popular imagination, Hugh Ashton had performed an exploit worthy of all praise. The only person who in all seriousness lifted up a dissentient voice was one who liked Hugh well—old Captain Trawl, his host.

'Too easy! too easy by half, my lad!' he would say, with an old mariner's half-heathen tinge of superstition. 'Can't be all fair wind and smooth sea, ye know. The worst squalls are those that come sudden, after a calm.'

WRITING.

EVERYBODY is now taught to write, and there are probably few persons belonging to what are called the respectable classes who do not imagine that they can write a letter fairly, both as regards caligraphy and correctness of expression. Our opinion is somewhat different. There is an immense amount of bad letter-writing. In a vast number of cases coming under our experience, persons of good education do not know how to write their own name intelligibly. We have seen a letter written by a 'finished' young lady of the period, in her nineteenth year. The penmanship itself was ugly, ungainly, and awkward; the spelling of several ordinary words was incorrect; small letters were used where capitals ought to have been; and we wondered, as we perused the ill-composed, badly written document, how a being of even moderate abilities could send forth anything so imperfect. Yet this young lady had been for years at a high-class school where masters had taught English in all its branches, the mistress of which also was a lady of cultivation and refinement. Penmanship is far too little attended to in schools, even of the best class. No doubt ornamental writing is often taught; but this style generally unfits the pupil for the plain everyday process. The best model for daily use should be placed before the young lady for at least one year before she leaves school, and after she has emerged from the regular text and half-text copies. Epistolary composition should also be studied as a distinct accomplishment, if the pupil have no natural talent that way.

Good penmanship is as necessary for a lady or gentleman as a good style of talking or reading. If a man is owner of a large estate, with servants, money, and influence at command, we wonder all the more if he writes a mean, cramped, or illiterate hand. We take up his letter with a feeling of surprise, and say: 'What! is this the production of So-and-so? It looks like the wretched scraping of some poor labourer with a scarcity of ink to boot.' Bad writing has the same effect upon the eye as discordant tones in music have upon the ear.

Much has been said about judging character by handwriting. In many cases however, we should feel far from justified in reading an individual's habits or disposition in the writing he or she may produce. The manner of writing is often a matter of imitation, but it is often also a result of whim, without regard to what is neat, tasteful, or intelligible. Perhaps it might be as correct to say that it is a result of carelessness. We happen to know an English clergyman of

distinction whose letters are next thing to unreadable. Consisting of irregular scratchings, their meaning is barely guessed at, except by some one skilled in deciphering them. Is not such writing very like an indignity towards the individuals addressed? We entertain an utter detestation of this eccentricity in letter-writing, whether caused by sheer carelessness or by perverse oddity. We say the same thing of confused unintelligible signatures. No one is entitled to torment correspondents by these eccentricities.

It is difficult to realise the immense number of those who are brought day by day into correspondence and exchange many letters, perhaps without ever meeting; and as nothing is more misleading than written communications between people who are personally unacquainted with each other, the amount of misapprehension going on around us must be very great. An editor for instance, may have corresponded for years with a writer whom he has never seen, and while conversant with his or her literary ability, may be a total stranger to the character of his contributor. It is curious how often it happens that those who may write their thoughts and feelings in expressions perfectly natural to them, convey to their readers ideas of their mind, manner, and appearance often much at variance with the truth. Mere handwriting has with some a great effect—far more than is justified. A crabbed writing, difficult to decipher, certainly detracts from the pleasure of reading even the brightest ideas; while a free legible hand is prepossessing, carries you easily over commonplace, and enhances the charm of well-constructed sentences. Writing may be allowed to be characteristic, inasmuch as it indicates to a certain extent, temper and temperament; but even on these points it is not an unerring guide; for many can never command a manual dexterity sufficient to make writing free enough to harmonise with their really powerful character.

There is no accounting for the strange perversity with which some people writing under the influence of various strong emotions will do themselves gross injustice, that can never be redressed. A widow lady who had experienced severe reverse of fortune, and devoting her life to her children, had secluded herself from society, resolved, as they were grown up and scattered in various directions, to seek an agreeable family in which she could find a home. She advertised to this effect, and received a reply offering the prospect of a home such as of all others she would have chosen. The handwriting she recognised as from one with whom—although personally unacquainted—she had some years previously held a long correspondence, and to whom her antecedents were known. There were certain circumstances connected with that period that affected the widow deeply, and she answered in a style that was in fact just an hysterical giggle—as much representing her real mind as a face in the contortions of agony resembles the same countenance in repose. Among some cloudy allusions to the past, she made use of the words, 'Such a life as I have led;' and the epistle throughout was a foolish one to have written even to the person for whom it was intended; but to a stranger, must have appeared something much worse. The perceptions of this dawned on her

directly she had posted the letter; but it was 'too late;' and she was promptly and horribly humiliated by receiving an intimation that 'all further letters would be refused or handed to the police.' From the foolish wording of the letter her correspondent evidently pictured her as a woman of more than doubtful character.

We are often struck by the palpable mismatching of minds and bodies, and sometimes find a noble mind in a physique the most commonplace—a generous soul, large mind, and expansive benevolence with the exterior of a crowing little bantam!

One who has taken much interest in woman's work for women, relates that the most elegant, refined-looking letters she ever received, interesting her deeply, and inducing her, before an interview, to commit herself to promise of certain assistance, were from a dreadful old woman of enormous size, dirty, ragged, repulsive, degraded,—in a word, drunken—whom it was impossible to help. A companion with much strength of body and mind was required to attend to a lady who needed 'supervision.' From numerous applicants, one was selected whose letters were in a fine bold writing, whose sentences were telegraphic in their concise avoidance of unnecessary words, and conveyed an impression of steady phlegmatic presence of mind and capability of exercising control. An interview was requested; and a limp shrimp of a woman presented herself, shy, nervous, and halting in speech, on whom the lady requiring supervision would soon have 'turned the tables.'

Some are courageous, not to say audacious, on paper, who in personal intercourse are very much the reverse. Not difficult to understand, this—because in following the train of our own thoughts we frequently lose the sense that we are writing for any eye but our own; and the mistakes arising from this audacity lead to doubtful situations and perplexities. Those—and paradoxical as it may appear, they are many—who have immoderate affections and very moderate passions, are the most likely to be betrayed into expressions of which they do not realise the force and interpretation possible to them. On the other hand, people of violent temper and passions, conscious of the meaning of their words, are often very reticent in correspondence. There is little doubt but that the most matter-of-fact among us are impressed with 'the ideal' in a way they hardly acknowledge. A lady and gentleman, personally quite unknown to each other, fell, by a curious incident irrelevant to the present subject, into correspondence. They were each possessed of high mental power, and became mutually fascinated. He, in quest of a second self with a mind and heart that should satisfy his exalted aspirations, found in her letters an attraction that routed his cynicism, and prompted him to repose a confidence in her that he had never originally intended to have given. She found in his a power that deprived her of will, a strength that was a refuge for her weakness, a determined nature that would carry all before it; a temper that could endure and wait, but when aroused would probably burst into tempest the most violent. Not having practically much knowledge of the world, she was subdued and captivated by the eccentricity of the affair, gave him the blind trust he claimed as one whose

'religion was honour;' and to exemplify the power of mind over matter, confessed—as he exacted she should before an interview or even exchange of photographs—that this ideal had inspired her with an absorbing affection!

This veracious history ought to have ended here with, 'They met, and were happy ever after.' Had they met, it could not have ended as it did; for the two realities brought face to face would either have found their psychic affinity confirmed, and the twain would have become one; or the repellent end of the psychic magnet would have driven them asunder, to go home and shatter their ideal gods, and meditate at leisure over the mysterious problem of 'mind versus matter.' But they did not meet. After her unwise admission, his letters ceased; and she had the stinging mortification of accidentally receiving the confidence of another lady with whom this ideal of hers had also been corresponding, in his search for a woman with 'a good heart and refined mind.' She did not return the lady's confidence, nor would she betray her; but the feeling that she had merely been a subject of psychic vivisection for the gratification of an epicurean, roused a rage of wounded self-love within her, and she sent him words, by means that—as he never guessed the truth—must have lowered her at once to zero in the estimation of her erstwhile ideal. His answer was a fury of disappointment, words that were almost an execration. Her nature however, was one of those that can more easily recover from a painful fact than from an exasperating ideality. A fact is tangible; its proportions do not vary. We can grasp it, realise it, wrestle with it, wear it out; but an absorbing ideality has the whole battery of the protean subjunctive mood for ever playing on it. Bearing this in mind, young folks should be especially guarded in their correspondence with unknown persons; their missives, if they must write, should be brief and to the point.

Before concluding, we would revert to the evils of illegible caligraphy, and offer a word to those who have occasion to submit their manuscripts to the scrutiny of others. In our own editorial experience we can assure those who intrust their offerings to our consideration, that nothing is more annoying than a bundle of badly written and confused manuscript. We might go further and add that many an article, no matter how intrinsically good it may have been, has been condemned and returned to the author unread, simply on account of the villainous caligraphy.

MORE GHOST-STORIES UNVEILED.

THE 'ghost-stories unveiled' which have already appeared in our columns seem to have attracted considerable attention, as being endeavours on our part to shew that what are termed 'supernatural occurrences' are in nearly all cases capable of being solved by the exercise of a little common-sense. We are indebted to various contributors for the following examples, all of which are guaranteed to be strictly true and may be enjoyed by even the most timid reader:

The locality where the following occurrence took place is near a small village some eight or nine miles from the city of Armagh. On a gray

December night, now about sixteen years ago, a middle-aged bachelor was returning from a Christmas party to which he had been invited by some of his village friends. Our hero, whose name was Charlie Coburn, occupied the position of land-steward to a country gentleman resident near the village. Charlie lodged at my father's, and found himself on his way home at about the hour of twelve—not an unreasonable hour for a bachelor, certainly; but then Charlie was a model to his race, and his word was a law to the parish. On his way home to our house, he required to pass through the village; and as there was a strapping lassie at the party upon whom rumour affirmed Charlie 'had his eye,' we can suppose his thoughts to have been occupied with meditating on the fair Mary, whose company he had just quitted, as he paced the kerb-stone with three fingers in each waistcoat pocket—his favourite attitude when in a musing mood.

It was only a week or two before, that the introduction of gas-lamps in the village streets took place; and when our hero reached the end of the street, he was enabled, by the light of the last lamp, to perceive some person only a short distance in front of him, and proceeding in the same direction as himself. As the road to my father's was rather dreary and deserted, Charlie felt glad of the unexpected company he was about to come up with. Consequently, he withdrew his fingers from his waistcoat pockets, and went on at a swinging pace, so as to overtake the traveller as soon as possible. The latter gentleman, however, evinced not the slightest desire for Charlie's society. On the contrary, he kept moving ahead faster and faster, in proportion as his pursuer's pace increased. The two were during this time keeping their way along the footpath, which ran outside a high wall, inclosing the demesne of a nobleman who resided in the neighbourhood. In this wall, and just about a furlong or so past the last of the gas-lamps, was a curve, round which the lamp could not throw its rays, and it happened that at this very spot the gate leading into a graveyard was placed. Here the unsociable traveller suddenly and unaccountably disappeared from view.

It was impossible he could have jumped the wall, on account of its height; neither could he have crossed the road nor gone onwards, as in either case Coburn must have seen him. Then where had he gone? Not having passed the gate, he must have gone through it. But on examining the gate, it was found to be locked; and as the bars were too close to admit the passage of any human body, the only reasonable conclusion that Coburn could arrive at was, that he had been pursuing a ghost! Having settled this point satisfactorily (though suddenly) in his own mind, he thought it might be as well if he gave the ghost a chance of pursuing him. Coburn was neither superstitious nor cowardly; but this being the first time he had ever seen a real ghost, he felt rather unnerved. Not knowing what terrible consequences his temerity might bring upon him, and believing

discretion in this instance to be the better part of valour, he divested himself of his coat as quickly as possible, and throwing it over his shoulder, fled homewards, determined that if the ghost did give chase, it should not catch him without having at least a run for its victim.

We had not gone to bed on Coburn's arrival. He came—or rather rushed—in pale as a corpse, the perspiration pouring down his cheeks. His strange and untoward appearance seemed to put us all in such a state that none appeared to know what was the proper question to ask under the circumstances. However Charlie, who, on entering, had thrown himself into a chair, and his coat upon the floor, was the first to break the silence by gasping for 'a drink of spring-water.' He gulped it down; and my father, who had run to the door to see if there were no highwaymen lurking in the vicinity, came in, and grasping Coburn by the wrist—to feel his pulse, I suppose—asked what had happened.

'Oh!' pants Coburn, with horror depicted in every feature, 'I—I've seen a ghost!'

I shivered. But my father, who was not a believer in ghosts, laughed outright. This seemed to nettles our lodger considerably, as he always prided himself on his veracity, and could not bear to have it impugned, especially on so serious a subject. After he had calmed down a little, my father endeavoured to reason him out of his belief. But it was useless. 'He had seen a ghost, though he never believed in them before, and there was an end of it.'

'Well,' said my father, 'I have never seen a ghost; but I should much like to have it to say that I *had* seen one; and if you think there is any chance of your ghost favouring us with a second appearance, I propose that we both set off to the graveyard at once.'

Coburn seemed very reluctant to make the experiment; but as my father began to throw some slight aspersions on his courage, he at last consented, and they both set off. They examined the gate and found it locked; peered through the bars, but saw no sign of a ghost. Thinking the gentleman might have gone a second time for a stroll towards the village, they proceeded a short distance in that direction; but imagine their feelings when, on looking back, they saw behind them not one ghost, but two! Both ghosts went through the gate as before; but proved to be nothing eerier than the shadows of the two men, thrown by the newly erected gas-lamps, the bend in the wall causing the figures to appear as if they had vanished into the graveyard!

One evening some weeks ago, I was in my room preparing for bed, when I suddenly heard what sounded like footsteps coming along the passage leading to my room; then some one appeared to be feeling in the dark for the handle of the door, which was slightly shaken, and a low knock was heard. Of course I at once concluded that some one of the family was outside; and my door being locked, I called out to know who was there, but received no answer. Thinking this very odd, I went to the door and opened it; but, to my amazement, no one was outside, and yet I had heard no footsteps retreating. I must explain that my room is at the end of a long passage, to which you descend by five or six steps, my door

forming the end of the passage (my room being at the end of one wing of the house); therefore, on opening my door, I immediately commanded the whole of the corridor, and it seemed impossible for any one to have escaped in the time; and I knew that the two rooms opening on the same passage were locked up, so that no one could have got out of sight in that way.

Very much puzzled, I closed and locked my door; and after a brief interval the same thing was repeated. Cautious footsteps were heard approaching; then as if some one were feeling for the handle of the door in the dark, and shaking the door slightly by so doing; and then again a low knock. A second time did I open my door, but with the same result. No one was there. I frankly confess that I now began to feel somewhat uncomfortable, not on account of ghosts, but visions of thieves which floated across my mind (very irrationally, of course), and I felt persuaded that some one must be moving about the house; and yet I knew that every one else had gone to bed long ago; and I own I did not feel inclined to risk an encounter with this mysterious visitor while trying to arouse some one else, my room being some way from the rest of the family.

Determined however, if possible to find out what it was, I crouched down with my ear to the door, listening for a repetition of the noise, which was repeated a third time. But *now*, owing to my closeness to the door, I discovered the disturber of my peace in a *mouse*! It appeared this mouse, which had very evidently lost its way, had got down into the passage, and finding retreat rather difficult (owing, I suppose, to the steps), was rushing up and down the passage at full speed, thereby producing the sound of footsteps on the carpet, and on finding its egress barred by my door, trying to escape by running up the door; but the varnished paint affording it no foothold, the impetus of its run only sufficed to carry it up a short way (thus shaking the door and slightly moving the handle), and it then fell down with a flap, thus producing the knock.

I could not resist a hearty laugh when I found out the real cause of the disturbance; but yet it shows that stories of strange nocturnal noises should be received with great caution, for certainly I should always have declared that some one had been trying my door that night, had I not found out the real cause.

The following story, it is to be hoped, may assist still further in dispelling fears of what are termed supernatural visitors, by explaining one reason for house-bells 'ringing of themselves.'

I had quitted my temporary country residence for the winter, closed all the rooms, and left a trustworthy caretaker in charge, who occupied the kitchen. On the second night, while she sat at the fire, she was alarmed by hearing the drawing-room bell, which was high up in the passage to the kitchen, ring. She looked up into the passage, and there, surely enough, was the bell giving its last tinglyings. Her husband came home from his work, and to satisfy her, went up-stairs to the drawing-room. He unlocked the door, found everything in its usual state, carpet rolled up and ornaments and candlesticks covered. He returned, disbelieving his wife's story; but she persisted in

it; and she declared she would not for a year's wages remain an hour in the haunted house after nightfall. The days were at their shortest, and the husband required to be out at his work. In this difficulty her niece, a stout-hearted girl, volunteered to be her companion. Next evening the daylight disappeared as usual at an early hour, and soon afterwards the drawing-room bell rang. The niece sprang to her feet, ran into the passage, saw the bell still shaking, and rushed up into the drawing-room, which was found as before still and silent. With a good deal of entreaty, the caretaker was induced by her niece to remain in the kitchen. They again sat down at the fire, and left the passage-door open. A short time only elapsed when the bell in the passage again rang, and this time more loudly and continuously than before. The terror of the old woman now became extreme; but the younger crept cautiously round the half-open door, and there she saw the ringer of the bell—a half-starved rat, who impelled by hunger in the empty house, had made his way into the channel along which all the bell-wires had been laid from the several rooms into a common opening to the passage, and was discussing in his own thoughts the feasibility of jumping down from a height of five or six feet to the level of the kitchen floor, to seek for a supper. He was so hungered, that the presence of the girl did not frighten him away, and he remained with his forepaws in a state of unstable equilibrium, shaking the wire, while his glistening eyes shone out like two diamonds reflecting the light of the solitary kitchen candle. Had the stout-hearted girl not detected the presence of the hungry visitor, the belief would have been firm and not unreasonable, in the view of many, that some supernatural agency had rung the bell, and the legend of a haunted house would have hung round my little villa.

The following are related in the conversational style in which they were told to our contributor.

'I am sure none of you were ever so terrified by a ghost as I was,' said my Aunt Mabel. 'It was an American ghost, which perhaps accounts for its having been more wild and weird and altogether electrifying than anything ever met with in the old country. You know that I went to America when I was young, and that I spent many of my early years in a lonely farmhouse in the back-woods.'

'And without servants, Aunt Mabel?'

'Quite true, dear. Servants would not stay in such an out-of-the-way place without higher wages than we could give them, and indeed the "helps" we tried were often more deserving of the name of "hinderers." But we were all young and strong, and we never had happier days than when we all kept house together, and did the work with our own hands. Capital training it was, though at first of course we made many mistakes, everything was so new and strange to us.

'It was soon after our arrival at this lonely place that I met with a terrible fright. My sister Isabel and I shared the same room, and one night I was awakened by hearing her crying by my side.

'What is the matter, Isabel?'

'Oh, a toothache, a most dreadful toothache; and I have nothing to relieve it. If I could only get some brandy; a little burnt brandy would cure it in a moment.'

'My dear,' I said, jumping out of bed, 'I will get you some directly. I know where it is—in the parlour cupboard, and I have got the key.'

'But you have no light.'

'Oh, I can grope my way to the room, and then I can easily light my candle at the stove.'

'No sooner said than done. I wrapped a shawl round me, went swiftly and quietly down-stairs, felt my way through the dark and deserted room, and succeeded in lighting my candle at the stove. But no sooner did I hold up the lighted candle to make my way to the cupboard, than the most unearthly shriek rang through the room. At the same moment the light was suddenly extinguished. I was left in total darkness, and all was still and silent as before. Chilled with horror, and trembling in every limb, I groped my way back as well as I could, and told my story to Isabel; but she was in such pain that it did not make the impression on her that I expected. I got but little sympathy.

'It must have been the wind, or a wild-cat outside that screamed,' she said; 'and as to the light being put out, that of course was sheer accident. Candles often go out when they are just lighted. Of course,' she added, 'we are not such fools as to believe in ghosts.'

'This rather put me on my mettle; and moved besides by her moans of intense pain, I at last braced myself up to a second attempt. I went with great determination, resolving that nothing should now hinder me from bringing the remedy to my sister. Proceeding down-stairs again, all went well till I turned from the stove with the lighted candle in my hand. Instantly the same yell resounded in my ears, while something, I could not tell what, swept past me and dashed out the light! How I reached my room I never knew, but I crawled into bed more dead than alive; and as soon as I could speak I told Isabel that no matter what happened, nothing would induce me to make the venture again.

'Morning came at last, and with it the solution of the mystery. My brothers had come home late, bringing with them a screech-owl which they had caught, and had put into the parlour for safety till the morning. The light had of course disturbed it, and it had flown against the candle and extinguished it while uttering its peculiar and singularly hideous cry. My terror at the midnight ghost was a joke at my expense for long after.'

'I think you were very brave to go into the room a second time, Aunt Mabel.'

'Well, I think I was, I must admit. But I would have braved almost anything for Isabel, and I was a strong courageous girl, who hardly knew what fear was. Still, I can assure you that even to this day when I recall the scene, I seem still to feel the thrill of terror that shook me at the sound of that unearthly shriek. Heard for the first time in the dead of night and so close to my ear, it was truly startling and dreadful. It was a great relief when the mystery was so simply explained. But only imagine if it had never been explained! If the owl had got in unperceived, and had escaped by the chimney or an open window! How that ghostly shriek must have haunted me ever after! It would have been as frightful a ghost-story as you ever heard. But see! at the touch of the little wand of truth the ghost vanishes, and only a poor screech-owl remains!'

'Now let me tell the story of our "family ghost," said Miss B—. 'Such a useful, faithful, devoted spirit as it was! An Irish ghost; but not a banshee, more like a "delicate Ariel" or household fairy. I only fear its race is extinct now, as well as that of the invaluable servants who used to identify themselves with their master's family. Our ghost was before my time; but often and often have I heard my grandmother talk of it, and what a mystery it was. The household was large and varied, consisting of the old couple, some grown-up ones, one of them married, an orphan niece, and two or three young children in the nursery. There were no railways in those days, and when any of the family intended going to the county town, they had to be up at dawn of day, take a solitary breakfast, and set out on what was then a formidable expedition. Of course the affair used to be discussed in the family the evening before, commissions given, and the time of starting fixed on. And now comes the strange part of my story. Whether the servants were up in good time or not, the fire was always lighted, the kettle boiling, and breakfast ready at the appointed time! The clothes which came from the wash were found carefully sorted out and apportioned to their respective owners; none could tell by whom. If a fire were required in the nursery, it was kept up by invisible hands. Nurse was a heavy sleeper; but no matter; her deficiencies were supplied by the obliging and indefatigable ghost. Nurse used to find as bright a fire in the morning as she had left at night, the turf-basket replenished, and all as neat and orderly as hands could make it. To get out the breakfast things, my grandmother's keys must have been taken from her room, but by whom no one could tell.

"Leave the key-basket in my room," said a visitor the night before he left. "I am a light sleeper, and if the ghost comes to get my breakfast, I shall know it!"

'Towards daybreak he heard the keys tinkle, and instantly threw a dagger, which he had hidden under his pillow, to the spot whence the sound proceeded. In the morning the dagger was found stuck into the door, but no clue to the mysterious visitor could be found.

'At last my grandmother determined that the mystery should be solved, whatever it might be, and she prepared to sit up in her room all night, listening for the faintest sound. For a long time all was still; and my grandmother was beginning to fear that her long watch through the winter's night was only wasting her strength in vain, when at last, somewhere in the small-hours, she heard a slight thud upon the stairs. Instantly seizing her candle, she rushed out, just in time to see a slender figure in white, carrying a basket of turf on its arm. The fall of a sod from the fuel-basket was the sound she had heard. My grandmother was a brave woman, and swiftly as the white figure flitted on, swiftly did she follow after, up staircases and along passages, till just as it reached the nursery door, she overtook it, and discovered her niece walking in her sleep!

'It seems the poor girl was so anxious about the household arrangements that she used to rise in her sleep to accomplish all that she knew ought to be done. How her zeal nearly cost her life, through the foolish rashness of a young visitor, I

have already told you. She was never again permitted to sleep alone. My grandmother took her to her own bed; and clasped in her loving arms, the poor girl learned to forget her cares, and to take the full benefit of

Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.

'Had not my grandmother possessed good sense, courage, and resolution, the story might have had a very different ending.'

THAT DAY ON INNISMORE.

CHAPTER V.—THE CEREMONY OF THE TORR CLIFF.

MEANWHILE, as we afterwards learned, Mrs Vance and Major Barrett, after searching everywhere for us, and having waited a long while in hope of our reappearing, had gone back to the Cove to make inquiries and obtain the assistance of a guide. By that time however, the sea had become too rough for a boat to enter the caves; and as Morris had predicted, the fishermen, on hearing how we had so strangely disappeared, had assured Major Barrett that we were certainly in no danger. But whether it was that they resented his surliness toward them in the morning, or for some other reason were unwilling to give him information, or were unable to do so, he had failed to learn anything further from them except that it was as likely as not that we would return to the Cove by land.

As the weather seemed every moment more threatening, it was decided that Major Barrett should be landed on the island to look for us, the remainder of the party going on board the *Vampire*. Indeed even then the sea had got up so much that it was with some danger that the boat approached the rocks; and it was with the greatest difficulty that Major Barrett had succeeded in landing. And now, as we were approaching the harbour, suddenly passing round an angle of the cliff, we met our enemy. He was returning with one of the fishermen from, it is needless to say, a fruitless search for us round the shores of the island. Somehow, the man had led him to every place except the right one!

It was easy to see that the Major was in no pleasant frame of mind. He professed his delight at seeing Miss Vance safe, and assured her of the great alarm and anxiety her disappearance had caused, and added that he had received the most positive orders not to lose sight of her again until he had restored her in safety to Mrs Vance's keeping. 'For that young gentleman,' he continued, looking at me, 'is plainly not to be trusted; he deserves to be punished, Miss Vance, for the annoyance he has given us all. Unless indeed, which I can hardly suppose,' he added with a quick glance at my cousin, 'it was with your consent that he played us this trick.'

I saw that it was with difficulty that Clara restrained herself; she however, coldly replied that she must share whatever blame Major Barrett thought proper to assign; and nothing further was said.

The Major's displeasure was evidently not diminished. He treated me with positive rudeness, which under other circumstances I could not have tolerated; but I felt that for the present, however hard the task might prove, I must keep my temper and presence of mind.

When we reached the Cove, we found that the yachts had been obliged to get under weigh, and were standing off and on shore; and as soon as they approached near enough to see us, we made signs to them to return to Killalla. It was indeed high time that they should do so. A heavy sea was now running in the Sound; the wind was still rising, and there was every prospect of a stormy night. Those who do not know what the Atlantic on our western shores can do, and in how short a time a dangerous sea will get up, will find it hard to understand the change that had taken place since the calm and lovely morning. The waters were now dark and sullen-looking, and the waves of a leaden colour, except their crests, which everywhere were breaking and white with foam. The shore at the upper end of the Cove was composed of large rounded stones. When each wave rushed in, there came up from below the sound of a volley of sharp and heavy blows, as these ponderous marbles were rolled in by the water, to be carried out again with equal noise and violence by the retreating wave; and the odour of these flinty concussions filled all the air. Where the rocks were lofty and perpendicular, and the water very deep, the wave rose and fell almost silently, at one moment reaching far above high-water mark; at the next, discovering twenty feet or more of a steep wall of rock dressed with festoons of brown and glistening sea-weed. Where there were sunken rocks, or where the sides of the cliffs sloped down into the sea, there the waves broke with fury, and sent showers of white spray far up into the air.

The yachts were now half-way across the Sound; and we turned to make our way to the light-keeper's house, where we should have to pass the night, and where the luncheon-baskets, which fortunately for us had been sent on shore in the forenoon, had been taken.

I need not relate how we spent the hours of that evening, though hope sprung wildly in my breast. Major Barrett was in an extremely bad temper, which even when speaking to Clara he could hardly control. To me he scarcely spoke at all. As for my cousin and I, we were too anxious to be at our ease. Major Barrett's presence was of course extremely irksome to us, and I could see that he strongly suspected some understanding to exist between us. He seemed determined at any rate that we should not have an opportunity of exchanging a word except in his hearing. And so the evening wore on.

About ten o'clock a knock was heard at the door, and Morris came into the room where we were sitting, and said to me: 'If the lady and you sir, would like to see an old custom we have on this island, and one that few strangers have the chance of seeing, you can see it this very night; for the fire is lit, and the answer's come.'

I replied at once that we should be glad to see it. 'Won't you come?' I said to Clara.

My cousin hesitated, and I watched her anxiously; for a moment the colour left her cheek, and she seemed to find a difficulty in speaking.

Just then Major Barrett interfered: 'Pray, don't think of it, Miss Vance; that boy has no consideration for you.—Don't you see,' he said, turning to me, 'how you have wearied Miss Vance? As it is, she is looking quite pale. Her

mother has left her in my charge, and I certainly shall not allow her to be made ill by your folly, if I can prevent it.'

Before he had finished speaking however, the colour had returned to Clara's cheek, and she quietly and firmly replied: 'Major Barrett, I shall certainly go with Harry. The opportunity might never occur again. And I should not forgive myself were I to miss it.'

Some further remonstrances were made, but without effect. We went out, guided by Morris, the Major of course accompanying us, but too much displeased to care even to inquire what it was we were going to see.

The night was very dark; there was no moon visible; and the sky was covered with a thick layer of murky clouds. It was blowing pretty hard from the south-west, and occasionally a large drop of rain was felt. The roar of the breakers round the shores of the island was incessant. We were conducted quickly and in silence by Morris along a path that led us to the north-east extremity of Innismore, where one of the highest cliffs, of a strange and fantastic form, and conspicuous in daylight from the mainland, ran out some way into the sea. On the top of this cliff there was a level space of rock, near the centre of which a large fire was blazing. There was quite a crowd of the islanders gathered round the fire; men and women, young and old, were there. And to judge from the expression of their faces, something of interest was going forward. All eyes were turned on us as we arrived on the spot, and a murmur of voices arose from the assembly. But this was at once checked by a few words in Irish from Morris; and from that moment the people seemed hardly to notice our presence. All looks were directed across the sea towards the mainland, where a single light could be seen in the darkness, apparently upon the shore. As we made our way to the place to which Morris conducted us, we passed some men standing by a pile of fuel, which they seemed just about to light. A moment afterwards they had done so, and the flame shot up brightly into the dark sky. Morris, who stood close to us, whispered: 'Look well now across to the mainland till you see their second fire.'

A few minutes passed by, and still we saw nothing except the solitary light on the distant shore; yet all the people around us were watching intently. At first not a word was heard; then here and there some short sentences in Irish were uttered, becoming as time passed more frequent and audible. I glanced at Major Barrett's face; it shewed traces of displeasure and contempt; but influenced by the evident suspense of all the people present, he too was gazing out into the darkness. Suddenly an exclamation broke from the crowd. I looked across the water, and there, beside the first, was a second but brighter light. From this moment not a word was spoken by any of those about us. They stood in silent waiting, and with their heads uncovered. Just in front of where we were standing was a block of gray granite about three feet square, a foot high, and flat upon the top. As the second light on the mainland appeared, Morris pointed to the block and said: 'You and the lady should stand up there.'

I helped Clara up upon the stone, and placed

myself beside her; and taking off my hat as all had done except Major Barrett, we stood watching the fires on the far-off shore. Suddenly the second of them shot up with great brightness. I had at that moment taken my cousin's hand in mine, and the eyes of a good many in the crowd were turned in our direction. Major Barrett following their glances, and seeing, I suppose, what I had done, stepped quickly towards us, saying: 'We have had enough of this foolery. Come down sir, and let Miss Vance return. She is in my keeping, remember.' With these words he stretched out his hand—whether to help my cousin to descend or for some other purpose, I do not know; but Morris had quickly placed himself between Major Barrett and the place where we were standing, and there he stood, his head bare, and the firelight shining upon his white locks and venerable countenance.

'Out of my way, you fool!' the Major exclaimed.

Morris made no reply and no movement, except to motion him back with his slightly raised and open hand. The next moment the old man was felled to the ground.

But before Major Barrett had time to follow up the cowardly act, he was seized and held firmly by two young fishermen. No one else spoke or moved until the bright flame suddenly died away, and then the whole assembly knelt down, and remained kneeling until the second of the two lights on the mainland went out altogether. Then all rose up. And the strange performance in which we had taken part, whatever its object or meaning might be, was at an end.

The men who had laid hold of Major Barrett now released him, and raised Morris from the ground. He had been stunned by the blow, but not seriously injured, and in a few minutes he had recovered sufficiently to return with us to the lighthouse. If Major Barrett was in bad humour before, his temper certainly was not improved by what had just passed. He made a lame apology to Clara, and offered money to Morris, which was at once scornfully declined, and then he avoided all mention of the subject; and we returned in silence to the lighthouse, where a tolerably comfortable room had been provided for Clara.

By the next morning the weather had changed again almost as rapidly and completely as on the previous day. The sky was clear of clouds; the sea was still in motion, but was fast subsiding; and the wind had died away altogether. As there was no prospect of the yachts being able to come for us, I found Morris, and arranged with him that a boat from the island should take us across to the mainland. As soon, therefore, as the sea had gone down sufficiently, one of the fishing-boats was drawn down the stony beach and launched; and we having made a hurried breakfast at the lighthouse, with some difficulty embarked, and with Morris at the helm and a stout crew of four young fishermen, were rapidly taken across the Sound towards the little village of Dunkeel, the nearest point at which we could land, and where we hoped to find a vehicle to take us to the castle. The distance we had to row was seven miles, and in about an hour and a half we approached our landing-place. As we came near the jetty, we could see that a number of persons were collected on it,

evidently awaiting the arrival of our boat. As soon as we were within speaking distance, some questions in Irish were eagerly put to Morris, to which he replied in the same language; and when we landed and went in search of a conveyance, we left the crowd still interrogating our boatmen, and listening to their apparently unsatisfactory replies.

I had been very anxious to obtain another opportunity of speaking to Clara alone. There were still some details of our scheme which had not been decided on between us, and which the presence of Major Barrett had prevented us from arranging; but we had been quite unable to free ourselves from his company. And so we reached Killall Castle without my having been able to say another word in private to Clara.

We had left Innismore soon after sunrise, and on arriving at the castle it still wanted a little of nine o'clock; so we went to our rooms, and in this way it came about that Major Barrett contrived to see Mrs Vance before we all met in the breakfast parlour. What passed between them of course I am unable to say; but they evidently thought it best to make as light as possible of the, to them, annoying events of the day before. I had succeeded—I suppose they thought—in speaking to Miss Vance in private, and that could not now be helped; very soon I should have to join my regiment; the thing would not occur again; and only harm would be done by seeming to attach undue importance to what had happened. And so at breakfast, beyond inquiries as to what we had done, how we had so suddenly disappeared, why we had not returned, and the like, and a few reproaches for having broken up the party and caused so much anxiety, little was said. Major Barrett for his own reasons, and we for ours, were unwilling to say more than necessary about our doings on the island.

Before the day was over however, our adventures of the previous day were brought up again most unexpectedly, and with somewhat startling effect. It happened that on that evening some guests were dining with us—the Stubbses of Ballystubbs; Sir Loftus Haw, one of our county members, and his daughters; Dr Rumble from the neighbouring town; the clergyman of the parish, and some others. It was Dr Rumble, a kind old man, but rather fond of gossip, who gave an unexpected turn to the conversation. Hearing some one opposite him speak of the caves of Innismore and of our trip there yesterday, he said: 'What a pity you did not stay the night upon the island; you would then have seen a strange sight, and one you might live twenty years without having another opportunity of witnessing. They had an open-air wedding on Innismore last night.'

'Oh, impossible,' exclaimed several of the party at once. 'Why, Miss Vance and Harry and Major Barrett were on the island all night, and they saw no wedding.'

'No,' said Major Barrett; 'Miss Vance and I can bear witness that there was no wedding on Innismore yesterday. The people were all engaged about some other rather uninteresting ceremony, which we went to see, and of which we could not learn the meaning: a couple of fires lit, and a crowd of people round them, with their hats off, and kneeling; and we saw what appeared to be answering signals on the mainland. But there

was no bride or groom or rejoicings, or anything like a marriage.'

'Well, to think of that!' cried out Dr Rumble in his jovial hearty voice, delighted to have caught the ear of the company, for every one was now listening to him. 'Why, I declare that Miss Vance and Major Barrett have been present at a wedding and never found it out. Those fires were the very thing I am telling you of. When there is a case of absolute necessity, and when for any reason the marriage cannot be delayed, and it is too rough for the priest to go out to the island, they light a fire on Torr Cliff; and when the couple are ready, a second fire is lighted; and when the priest commences the ceremony on the mainland, a second fire is lit on this side; and then as the priest pronounces them man and wife, a brighter flame suddenly shoots up. The happy pair meanwhile—did no one point them out to you?—standing hand in hand on a block of granite, I believe between the fires; the ring of course'—

At this moment Major Barrett, his face contorted with rage, started to his feet. 'Zounds! Mrs Vance,' he said, his voice trembling with excitement, 'this is some villainy on the part of that scoundrel there,' pointing towards me. 'It was he and your daughter who stood hand in hand last night on that stone between the fires, and went through a piece of mummery that none but idiots will call a marriage. It would have been well, Mrs Vance, had you taken my advice, and refused to let him come here at all; and now, if you will allow me, I shall have at once removed from your house a person that has shewn himself unfit to continue a moment longer in it; and horse-whipped if he should venture to enter it again.'

I need not attempt to describe the scene that followed. Poor Clara had fainted, and for a few minutes all our efforts were directed to restoring her. Then I, not having been taken by surprise, and able fortunately to remain collected, when order was a little restored, begged all present to hear my account of the affair. This they were very willing to do; so—premising that Major Barrett might have an opportunity of horse-whipping me, and welcome, provided he could find himself able to do so—I told them as shortly as I could of my long attachment to my cousin, of the means that had been adopted, as I believed, to separate us, and of the difficulty I had had in obtaining an opportunity of inquiring the nature of Miss Vance's feelings towards myself. And I concluded by stating my conviction that had my kind old uncle lived, he would not have been unfavourable to my suit, and, under the circumstances, would not have found it hard to pardon the step we had taken, a step which would never have been necessary had he lived.

The party, as was natural, broke up at once, but not before those who knew my uncle best had shewn a disposition to side with me in the matter.

The first thing next morning, Mrs Vance sent for Father Dugan the parish priest, a kind old man, who had been a warm friend of my uncle. I saw him as he left the castle after the interview, and there was a merry look in his eye as he warmly grasped my hand, though he gravely shook his head and said: 'O Master Harry! you never thought last night, I daresay, of the trouble you'd be getting me into.' He had refused however, as

I learned from him, to hear of any doubt as to the validity of the marriage. It was another question, he admitted, what the authorities might have to say to him for having celebrated it. 'What!' he exclaimed, 'not a good marriage? Then I'd like to know what's to become of old Biddy Maguire, who's a grandmother now? and of Dennis and Mary Mulloy, whom I married when they were wearied out waiting the winter that no one could get to the island? And there's poor Lucy Morris, whose heart would have just broken if I had not married her to Manus before he died, poor fellow. No, no! I am in no doubt about your marriage, Master Harry; but I am in great doubt about the necessity for it. And that fire was not to be lit except in case of urgent necessity; and the boys out there know that, and I think they won't be so glad to see me the next time I visit the island.'

Whether Mrs Vance had been convinced by Father Dugan's arguments, or that she and Major Barrett now saw that things had gone too far for their plans to succeed, I cannot say; but Major Barrett having written me a short apology for his violent language, left the castle. Mrs Vance, with as good a grace as possible, gave her consent to a union which it was too late to oppose. I was fortunately able to effect an exchange into a regiment not going abroad; and to set all question at rest, the marriage ceremony was in due course celebrated in the parish church; though Clara and I and Father Dugan and Morris—whom, need I say, I rewarded handsomely—have always considered our wedding to date from That Day on Innismore.

'HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF'

THE above dictum is frequently expressed, but without much consideration of the degree of truth contained in it. The supposition or belief is that past events are likely to reoccur, to revolve as it were in circles or orbits, so as to come round again into view after a greater or smaller lapse of time. It may however be confidently stated that such a repetition is neither probable nor possible unless all the accompanying and surrounding circumstances are similar, all the factors in the sum-total analogous in character and equal in amount. Such a complete harmony of conditions is scarcely conceivable. We shall endeavour to shew that resemblances do occasionally present themselves, which, to say the least, are remarkable, and calculated to tempt persons into a belief that history does repeat itself; some of the salient features are similar, and no note taken of those which are dissimilar.

At the close of the Franco-German War of 1870-1, when France was pressed down with such an agony of tribulation, attention was drawn to a series of events dating more than five centuries earlier, involving many of the same kinds of disaster to the same nation. Epitomes of the two clusters of events were placed in parallel columns, for facility of comparison:

FRANCE, 1356.	FRANCE, 1870-1.
Defeat of the French at Poitiers.	Defeat of the French at Sedan.
King John of France taken prisoner.	Emperor of the French taken prisoner.

Paris armed by a government formed of the prévôt and échevins of the city, deputies in the States-general.

The Milices Bourgeoises organised.

Peace made with England, but Paris remaining armed and defiant.

The French army marches against Paris.

The Parisians seize all the artillery in the city. They offer to treat, but are refused.

They appeal to the other towns of France, which however will not rise.

The States-general meet at Compiègne.

Two nobles are massacred by the Paris mob.

Sorties resulting in failure are made from Paris.

Paris taken by the army, due in part to dissensions among the Paris mob.

Paris armed by a government formed of the deputies of the city in the Corps Législatif.

The National Guard organised.

Peace made with Germany, but Paris remaining armed and defiant.

The French army marches against Paris.

The Parisians seize all the artillery in the city. They offer to treat, but are refused.

They appeal to the other towns of France, which however will not rise.

The Assembly meets at Versailles.

Two generals are massacred by the Paris mob.

Sorties resulting in failure are made from Paris.

Paris taken by the army, due in part to dissensions among the Paris mob.

that she might possibly have another husband or son at a future time, but not another brother, her father and mother being aged people. Robert of Normandy and William Rufus besieged their brother Henry at St Michael's, and reduced him to great privation. Robert, taking compassion, sent supplies of water and wine to the beleaguered Prince. William rebuked what he called ill-timed generosity. Robert justified himself thus: 'Shall I suffer my brother to die of thirst? Where shall we find another when he is dead?' Edward I., we are told by Hume, on hearing of the death of his father and his infant son, said that the death of a son was a loss which he might hope to repair, whereas the death of a father is of course irreparable. Sir Walter Scott, in the *Antiquary*, quotes a scrap of an old ballad typifying the same kind of sentiment:

He turned him right and round again,

Said: 'Scorn na at my mither;

Light loves I may get mony a ane,

But Minnie ne'er anither.'

Nor do recent times leave us without evidence in the same direction. Miss Rogers, in her *Domestic Life in Palestine*, gives in English a story which was narrated to her by a native gentleman. Ibrahim Pacha, son of Mehemet Ali, raised an army in Palestine in augmentation of the Egypto-Syrian forces; and in so doing, stripped many a household of its bread-winner. One day a woman solicited an interview with Ibrahim at Akka. This being granted, she said: 'O my lord, look with pity on thy servant, and hear my prayer. A little while ago there were three men in my house—my husband, my brother, and my eldest son; but now, behold they have been carried away to serve in your army, and I am left with my little ones without a protector. I pray you grant liberty to one of these men, that he may remain at home.' Ibrahim, taking compassion on her, asked which of the three she would prefer to see liberated. She replied: 'My lord, give me my brother.' 'How is this, woman?' do you prefer a brother to a husband or a son?' The woman, who was distinguished for her wit and readiness of speech, replied as follows:

'If it be God's will that my husband perish in your service,

I am still a woman, and God may lead me to another husband;

If on the battle-field my first-born son should fall,

I have still my younger ones, who in God's time may be like unto him;

But oh! my lord, if my brother should be slain,

I am without remedy, for my father is dead, and my mother aged;

And where should I look for another brother?'

Ibrahim Pacha was so much pleased with this ingenious line of argument, and probably with the versified form which it assumed, that he released from military service all the three men; enjoining on the woman silence as to the circumstances, lest other women should raise a similar plea. The real facts were not publicly known till Ibrahim's departure from Akka, after the overthrow of the Egyptian government in Syria in 1840.

Literary coincidences, historical in regard to being presented at different periods, are sometimes so strange as to be almost incredible.

It would not be easy to find two historical narratives with more similarity among the incidents than these. Many phenomena, it has often been remarked, in the career of Napoleon Bonaparte bore considerable resemblance to those experienced or produced by Oliver Cromwell. History may be considered to have repeated itself here; but as before mentioned, only in such incidents as were surrounded by analogous circumstances.

If history sometimes seems to repeat itself, does human thought do the like? Do the same ideas pass through the minds of two persons unknown to each other? This is a more subtle problem, for it touches the mysteries of mental action, psychological manifestation. What are called 'undesigned coincidences' among poets are so numerous that no one can count them; sometimes bringing a charge of plagiarism against the later of two writers—sometimes attributing to him a forgetfulness that he had ever read the passage adverted to; sometimes inducing a belief that two minds have really and honestly hit upon the same idea clothed in nearly the same words.

One particular sentiment, wish, yearning (to give a very interesting example) has multiplied or repeated itself in many curious ways—namely a desire to save the life of a father or a brother rather than that of a husband or a son. Many recorded instances might be quoted, bearing a common resemblance in this—that the choice is made not because the love or affection is greater, but from the less probability of repairing the loss if loss occur. Sophocles put words into the mouth of Antigone, justifying her conduct in having run the risk of death in order to secure the right of sepulture for her brother; she could not have another brother, because her father was dead. Darius, according to Herodotus, asked the wife of the condemned Intaphernes whether she would that he pardoned her husband, brother, or son. She answered: 'My brother.' When asked the reason for this unexpected choice, she explained

Absence of mind may, like other characteristics, lead two men into exactly the same kind of absurdity; but there is one case in which, if the records are reliable, the absurdity was accompanied by circumstances parallel to a degree of minuteness altogether inexplicable. When the *Spectator* of more than a century and a half ago sketched the character of Will Honeycomb, who was what is called an absent man, he probably had in his thoughts some real personage; and many readers have been amused at the story of the watch and pebble. But what if there be a story in print almost exactly like it, laid also in London, but at a very different date? Six or seven years ago there appeared a narrative which, though the name of Will Honeycomb was not used, we may conveniently place side by side with an extract from the *Spectator*:

1711.

'My friend Will Honeycomb is one of those sort of men who are often absent in conversation, and what the French call a *rêveur* and a *distract*. A little before our club time last night we were walking together in Somerset Gardens, where Will had picked up a small pebble of so odd a make that he said he would present it to a friend of his, an eminent virtuoso. After we had walked some time, I made a full stop with my face towards the west, which Will knowing to be my usual method of asking what's o'clock in an afternoon, immediately pulled out his watch, and told me we had seven minutes good. We took a turn or two more, when to my great surprise I saw him squir away his watch a considerable way into the Thames, and with great sedateness put up the pebble he had before found into his pocket.'

1872.

'The Rev. G. Harvest, author of several theological works, was a very absent man. A friend and he walking in the Temple Gardens previous to the meeting of the Beef-steak Club in Ivy Lane, Mr Harvest picked up a small pebble of so strange a form that he said he would present it to Lord Bute, who was an eminent virtuoso. After they had walked some time, his friend asked him what o'clock it was; to which he, taking out his watch, answered that they had seven minutes good. Accordingly they took a turn or two more; when, to his friend's astonishment, Mr Harvest threw his watch into the Thames, and with great coolness put the pebble into his pocket.'

What are we to think of this? Have there really been *two* episodes so wonderfully alike? Will Honeycomb's Club and the Beef-steak Club; Somerset Gardens and the Temple Gardens; seven minutes to spare till club-time in each case; the picking up of a curiously shaped pebble; the intention of shewing this pebble to an eminent virtuoso; the pocketing of the pebble and the flinging away of the watch—the analogy is complete at all points. Too complete indeed. We have been induced to dive a little into this matter, the result of which will serve to illustrate (in a future article) the difficulty of verifying history, of separating the reliable facts of past events from traditions and popular beliefs 'built upon the sand.'

Robert Burns, gifted with so glowing a fancy, and capable of such a command of language in

giving it expression, nevertheless produced effusions the leading idea of which had in some instances been in print before his time. For instance, he threw into vigorous verse that which another had long before put into vigorous prose. There is to be found the following passage in Wycherley's *Plain Dealer*, produced in or about the year 1676: 'A lord! What, art thou one of those who esteem men only by the marks of value fortune has set upon 'em, and never by intrinsic worth? But counterfeit honour will never be current with me; I weigh the man, not his tale; 'tis not the king's stamp can make the man better or heavier. Your lord is a leaden shilling which you bend every way, and defaces the stamp he bears instead of being raised by it.' How intensely is all this given in Burns's well-known song *A Man's a Man for a' that*!

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts and stares and a' that;
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that;
The man of independent mind
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might—
Guid faith he maunna fa' that.

If Burns was unaware of the existence of this passage in the *Plain Dealer*, the parallelism furnishes one variety of History repeating itself, a figurative analogy presented to two different minds at widely different periods.

Two real events were associated, by coincidence and by misconception, in a singular way. At Angers, in 1650, a country priest, of notoriously bad character, had a dispute about money matters with the tax-collector of the district; the latter soon after was missing, and strong suspicion fell on the priest. About the same time a man was executed in the same town for highway robbery, and his body gibbeted in chains by the roadside. The friends of the highwayman came one night and tore down his body, in order that they might bury it; but being disturbed, they threw it into a pond near the priest's residence. Shortly after, some men, in dragging the pond for fish, brought up the corpse in their net; and it was immediately said to be the body of the tax-collector. Suspicion now turned so strongly against the priest that he was arrested, tried, convicted, and condemned. He solemnly protested his innocence; but when the day of execution arrived, he admitted that he had murdered the missing man. Nevertheless the body found in the pond was *not* that of the tax-collector, but of the highwayman; the priest, though deserving of punishment, was convicted and executed for a murder which he had not committed—that is, the murder of the man whose body was found in the pond. But where was the tax-gatherer's body? In a pit which the priest had dug in his garden. There were thus two dead bodies, one murdered and the other gibbeted, near the priest's house at one time; he knew of one, the highwayman's friends knew of the other; and

hence this remarkable coincidence of complicated mistakes.

A little consideration will thus shew that if 'History repeats itself,' such a result can only follow just in the same degree that the surrounding circumstances are analogous; and that the remaining examples belong to the class of accidental coincidences. Science, as well as the active affairs of life, not unfrequently illustrates the same principle. If two *savants* hit upon the same discovery at or about the same time, each without knowing of the other's proceedings, we may safely infer that the surroundings were similar, the soil just in the proper state for growing that particular crop, the mental furniture of the two men nearly alike. Two mathematical astronomers of profound acquirements, for instance, M. Leverrier in France and Mr Adams in England, were engaged at the same time, unknown to each other, in elaborating a large mass of calculations which led to the discovery of the planet Neptune. Both discovered the distant stranger, and both received from astronomers the honours of discoverer. It was not merely a fortuitous coincidence. Already a surmise had been formed that some unknown planet *might* possibly cause certain irregularities which had been noticed in the orbital movements of Uranus; this idea or surmise set two men to work on the same problem at the same time, and saw the same result simultaneously achieved. Examples of this, both in discovery and in invention, are by no means uncommon.

CRACK-NUT SUNDAY.

It is well known that in the olden times many holiday diversions, and even occasionally fairs, were held within the precincts of our parish churches. For instance, in the registers at Winchester there is to be seen a copy of a mandate from William of Wykeham, which forbids juggling, the performance of loose dances, ballad-singing, the exhibiting of profane shows and spectacles, and the celebration of other games, in the church and even in the churchyard of Kingston-on-Thames, on pain of excommunication. It would appear however, that even this strong measure did not prevent the origin, or at all events the practice, of another ancient custom, of which little or nothing is known except that it is thought to have been peculiar to Kingston, but which was carried on in the church itself, even during the time of divine service, down to the end of the last century, if not to the beginning of this. The congregation, strange as it may sound, used to crack nuts during service on the Sunday next before the eve of St Michael's Day. Hence that Sunday was called 'Crack-nut Sunday.' The custom was not restrained or confined to the younger branches of the congregation, but was practised alike by young and old; and it is on record that the noise caused by the cracking was often so loud and so powerful as to oblige the minister to break off for a time his reading or his sermon until silence was restored.

The above custom is thought by one or two antiquaries to have been connected in some way or other with the choosing of bailiffs and other members of the corporate body on Michaelmas Day, and with the usual feast which attended that proceeding. Readers of Goldsmith how-

ever, will not perhaps have forgotten a passage in the fourth chapter of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, in which the good vicar, speaking of his parishioners, says: 'They kept up the Christmas Carol, sent true-love-knots on St Valentine's morning, ate pancakes at Shrove-tide, shewed their wit on the first of April, and religiously *cracked nuts* on Michaelmas Eve.' It would be curious to learn whether this custom prevailed in other parts of the country, or whether Oliver Goldsmith made acquaintance with it in his wanderings through the south-west suburbs of London.

LONGING FOR SPRING-TIME.

HASTE, hoary Winter! Loose thy weary chain
From the dull heavens and the deadened earth,
That the soft bloom of flowers, the gladsome birth
Of blossom Spring may visit us again.

No feathery leaflets flutter on the lime;
No flower-buds bursting, gem the sward beneath;
No song-birds warble with melodious breath,
As in the joyous flush of summer-time.

Thy touch hath chilled the greenness from the bough,
Robbed the still forest of its pleasing shade;
Thy wild breath swept the flowers from the glade;
And birds have fled to balmy regions now.

Then haste thee, in thine ice-wheeled car, away
To the ice-carven deserts of the North,
That the Queen-maiden Spring may venture forth,
And gladden hill and meadow with her sway.

In her soft hands a beaker brimmed with buds;
On her soft lips a burst of youthful song;
The sunshine in her shadeless eyes among
The sleeping boughs, shall quicken all the woods.

Then shall the joyous merle amid sprays
Of pink-flushed hawthorn join the robin's glee,
And the glad thrush sing softly from the tree,
Filling the clear air with his loveful lays;

Then shall the stream make gentle murmuring,
In amber light between new-blossomed trees,
And all the butterflies and golden bees
Winnow the warm air in the wake of Spring.

Along the green bank, on the velvet sod,
All bright with flowers, my daily walk shall be;
And these shall turn my thankful heart to thee,
Their painter and their maker, who art God.

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- 1st. All communications should be addressed to the Editor, 339 High Street, Edinburgh.
- 2d. To insure the return of papers that may prove ineligible, postage-stamps should in every case accompany them.
- 3d. MANUSCRIPTS should bear the author's full Christian name, surname, and address, legibly written.
- 4th. MS. should be written on one side of the leaf only.
- 5th. Poetical offerings should be accompanied by an envelope, stamped and directed.

Unless Contributors comply with the above rules, the Editor cannot undertake to return ineligible papers.

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